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## EDITORIALS\*

### A COUNTY UNIT PLAN OF MEDICAL CARE FOR CITIZENS WITH LOW BRACKET INCOMES—REPORT OF THE C. M. A. COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

*California Medical Association Council Accepts the Report and Recommendations of the Committee on Public Relations.*—The fall meeting of the Council of the California Medical Association was held in Los Angeles on September 24. At that meeting a detailed report from the California Medical Association Committee on Public Relations was presented to the Council by Dr. John H. Graves, retiring chairman of the committee. The minutes of that meeting are printed in the California Medical Association column of this issue. (See item 38, page 357.) For the information of members of the California Medical Association, from the *Bulletin* of the Los Angeles County Medical Association is printed what is somewhat of a digest of certain matters contained in the report which was made to the Council. (See page 353.)

\* Editorials on subjects of scientific and clinical interest, contributed by members of the California Medical Association, are printed in the Editorial Comments column, which follows.

*The Los Angeles County "Bulletin" Report Printed in This Issue.*—An inspection of the *Bulletin* article above referred to suggests some interesting thoughts. In due time, when the details of the report of the Committee on Public Relations are printed, it is hoped that members of the county societies will give them most careful study. The members of that committee have given a tremendous amount of time and study to these problems in efforts to evolve something that would not only be efficient and practical but would also be acceptable to both the profession and the lay public.

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*The Large Attendance at the Los Angeles Meeting Augurs Well for the Future.*—This subject cannot be left without commenting upon the very large number of members of the Los Angeles County Medical Association who inconvenienced themselves to be present at a 6 o'clock good fellowship dinner on October 12, which was followed by addresses that were listened to with rapt attention, even though the last talk was not finished until almost 11 o'clock. To be able to report an attendance of some seven hundred members of the society as being present at such a meeting may be taken as an indication of the real interest which members of the California Medical Association nowadays are taking in these medico-legal-economic problems. Even though there was no time for general discussion at the meeting, there was much exchange of opinion on the days succeeding, as physicians who were present later discussed the papers with colleagues whom they met in their hospital rounds. The large attendance and the keen attention to the speakers may be taken as a real index of increased interest in these problems. With such a spirit evident, the future may be confidently faced.

### A SANTA BARBARA CITIZEN PROTESTS PAY PATIENTS IN COUNTY HOSPITAL

*A News Dispatch Concerning the Santa Barbara County General Hospital.*—Readers of this journal may have noted a news dispatch in the daily press of October 7, in which it was stated that a citizen of Santa Barbara County had made demand upon the district attorney of Santa Barbara County to take action to prevent the board of supervisors of that county from admitting citizens who are non-indigent to the Santa Barbara County General Hospital and its Santa Maria branch, for hospitalization and treatment. The editor of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE sent for copies of the Santa Barbara newspapers in order to get more details. In the Miscellany section of this issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, the articles which appeared on October 6 in the Santa Barbara *Daily News* are reprinted. (See page 351.)

*Influence on Lay Opinion of Medical Articles in the Lay Press.*—In the medical and lay press during the last few years have appeared many and varied articles dealing with phases of medical economics. Much of such literature has been of a general nature and has dealt more with the causation of economic evils than with lucid and practical remedial measures whereby the evils complained of might be eliminated. These many expositions and discussions of medical economic problems have served a purpose, because in that way many physicians and medical groups and societies have been led to take an active interest in the problems which heretofore have been passed by as more or less unworthy of notice, because not dealing with medical subjects from the scientific standpoint.

We physicians are fairly well agreed that the tendency among medical practitioners is to develop individualistic rather than group consciousness. Therefore, when problems requiring group thought and cooperation come before us, it is necessary to carry on special campaigns in publicity. In that way a larger number of physicians are induced to study the issues under consideration.

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*Perhaps the Medical Profession Has Been Too Complacent.*—Conscious of the large amount of altruistic and gratuitous professional service which has always been, and still is being rendered in public hospitals and in private practice, members of the medical profession have felt it unnecessary to notice or reply to the onslaughts of sectarians and of commercial propagandists. Such persons, for purposes known to themselves, have found it a profitable sport to malign and misrepresent the practitioners of regular or nonsectarian medicine. For years there has been a somewhat active propaganda about the "great medical trust" and about our national organization—the American Medical Association and its constituent state societies—to the effect that these are animated by narrow and sordid motives. Knowing the falsity of such assertions, and recognizing their sources of origin, it was only natural that nonsectarian physicians should refrain from dignifying with notice the slanders and the slanderers.

It is possible that in this a partial error may have been committed. We should have remembered that such tales, often repeated as they were in pseudo health columns in the daily press, could not do otherwise than mislead a goodly number of lay citizens into thinking that there must be considerable truth in the statements made, if no replies in contradiction were forthcoming. However, the medical profession in these matters was more or less in the unfortunate situation of receiving from some citizens blame if it did, and from others blame if it didn't. It is easy to understand why it chose to remain somewhat aloof, having faith that the righteousness of its cause and standards would justify nonsectarian medicine in the minds of all citizens who were really willing to inform themselves.

*Non-Opposition May Have Permitted Hospital Evils to Grow.*—Because of the reluctance which physicians and the organized medical profession have displayed in not attacking some of the more patent medico-legal evils, it is possible that herein may be found one of the reasons why, almost over night, some of these evils have assumed most unusual proportions. Take for example the points brought out in the article by Mr. John M. Peirce of the California Taxpayers Association which was printed in the September CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE (pages 204-205), in which was shown the very large proportion of California citizens who were receiving treatment in public county hospitals. The percentages given must have been a surprise to many physicians, and to lay citizens also. In our editorial comments thereon, the hope was expressed that all county medical societies in California would see fit to check and report on the conditions of their respective county hospitals. Several of the county units have already done this. If all county medical societies would do so, much good would result.

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*The Santa Barbara County General Hospital Situation Worthy of Attention.*—The above is written as indirect comment on the Santa Barbara Daily News articles referred to above and which are reprinted in the Miscellany department of this journal.

The open letter written by Mr. William S. Long, a citizen of Santa Barbara, contains much valuable information. Every member of the California Medical Association should read it. Also should be noted the steps which Mr. Long has taken to bring about an investigation of the Santa Barbara County General Hospital. His requests seem a practical way of securing a hearing on the points which he makes. If Mr. Long is correct in his contention that it is an illegal expenditure of public funds to give hospitalization and treatment to non-indigent citizens, and if that point could be established through court decisions, it is possible that some members of the boards of supervisors in other counties of California who seem to be in favor of pay patients may change their opinions.

It has been a long time since the official journal of the California Medical Association has given so much space to newspaper comments as are covered by the articles above referred to. The editor makes no apology for this action, for he believes that a perusal of the articles will go far in making possible for many physicians a better understanding of certain California county hospital problems. Readers of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE do themselves and their profession an injustice when they do not take the time to read Mr. Long's letter and the newspaper article dealing with the Santa Barbara County Hospital situation.